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A-14391

1. "...[He conversations with three young men] while riding in a second-class compartment on a train going from Rome to Naples, I met a student who was returning to his home in the Naples area after two years at a college in London, where he studied economics. He told me his mother had farm lands around Naples but that conditions were so unpromising that he himself planned to go to Montevideo to make his start, choosing an undeveloped area with more promise, he thought, than the US would offer him.
2. "He commented freely on the misuse of US aid funds in Italy. He said the Italian government had fattened while the poor became poorer. He protested that relief shipments were sold to the poor on the black market or sold to those who could pay and the proceeds just went to fatten the [Italian] government even more.
3. "He said that he was not a Communist but did not blame those who were and expected that the Communist regime would come in at the next election because the people wanted anything which was opposite to what they had now, since things couldn't be worse.
4. "[Second young man]: Working as the interpreter, we engaged in restaurant conversation at Naples with a recent graduate in law. He said that conditions were not improving in Italy because money went to the church and the government ('one and the same') instead of to relieving the poor and especially to relieving unemployment. An enlightened government, he maintained, would let the unemployed build houses for those without them. He was asked about the funds needed to build the houses, and he said the government should supply the funds even if it (the government) had to issue paper money. Even if issuing paper money should affect the currency disastrously, 'what of it,' he said.
5. "[Third young man]: A reporter whom I met on a train (in a second class compartment) going from Naples to Rome wanted to know why we liked Eisenhower when he was a military man. He asked us why we didn't want another democrat in power. The young man told me he used to be a Fascist but was now a liberal and quite left. I asked him if he meant 'very left,' and he said, 'Yes.'
6. "The young man is the sports editor for Paese Sera and maintained that football was the only live thing in Italy. Everything else stopped with Boccaccio and Machiavelli, and there has been no independent writer since then. The sports editor now does some translating on the side. He thinks the present (Italian) government is in the hands of the Church, as is 75% of the wealth of Italy.

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7. "He told us his story: He was a Fascist and in the Italian Army at the beginning of World War II but got disillusioned with Fascism. He had been reading English books and when he heard the Allies were landing in Salerno, he deserted and went to Salerno with a copy of George Bernard Shaw under his arm. He shouted to the guard who intercepted him at the Allied lines: 'I'm for Ben Franklin, Clark Gable, and I want to fight for freedom.' The Allies flattened him against a rock so he wouldn't get shot. Then they turned him over to the Intelligence. After that, he continued with the Allies as they marched up the boot of Italy. Sometimes he had a gun, but usually not for long, since the Allies preferred to keep him for Psychological Warfare, where he did his best helping with broadcasts, etc. What disturbed him the most, however, was the fact that as fast as the Allies took over a town, they appointed a former Fascist to run it. He would protest about this and would say: 'Where does freedom come in?' He wanted to help run Bologna, but they (the Allies) wouldn't let him. They just kept putting in more Fascists all the way up the boot and virtually reinstated the old regime with all its lack of freedom and since then have been bolstering the same.
8. "My husband told him he felt sure the man jumped to conclusions, that the Allies were not motivated by the desire to reinstate Fascism, but that it was necessary for the army to put experienced Italians into municipal jobs in order to get the various towns running smoothly and they just could not experiment with well-meaning Liberals who were inexperienced just so long as there was a war to win. The man was better balanced and less militant than the other two young men but quite unconvinced by our remarks.
9. "It seemed to us that this young man did not have a brief for the Soviet type of Communism. He indicated, however, that the Liberals had repeatedly backed parties that professed an interest in the people's welfare and the moment the Liberal-backed parties got into power, they sold out to the oligarchy and the Church. The de Gasperi (government) Christian Democrats are no exception. Hence, apparently the Communists are the only ones who consistently refuse to be swallowed up by this moneyed clique that is in league with the Church interests. We did not know quite what to say to our acquaintance, especially since he kept trying to find out who John [not otherwise identified] was, and John preferred to keep this obscure, identifying himself only as an engineer on business."

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